



Florida Health Mission:

To protect, promote
& improve the health
of all people
in Florida through
integrated state, county,
& community efforts.

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Governor

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY REDUCES CASES OF HIV/AIDS

~Health department breaks the silence to reduce the trend~

TALLAHASSEE - Nearly seven years ago, one in 35 blacks in St. Lucie County were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS – the highest rate in Florida. To address this growing epidemic, the St. Lucie County Health Department developed a strategic plan, *Breaking the Silence in St. Lucie County, A Strategic Approach to Reducing the Burden of HIV/AIDS*, that identified actionable objectives to reduce the number of individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS in the county. As a result of this effort, the rate of new HIV infections in St. Lucie County has dropped 54 percent over the past eight years.

“The St. Lucie community has worked together to produce dramatic results with HIV prevention,” said Interim Deputy Secretary for Health and Deputy State Health Officer for Children’s Medical Services Dennis V. Cookro, MD, MPH. “At the Florida Department of Health – St Lucie, and across the state, we are committed to disease prevention through community collaboration.”

Numerous community engagement activities included the “Shop Talk” program, which enlisted the help of salons and barbershops to distribute information about HIV and the availability of testing. In addition, the *Faith Talk* program worked with churches and trained community health educators on this sensitive topic.

Additional outreach included a federal program, Weed N Seed, that combats violent crime and substance abuse, and local health care professional education to incorporate HIV prevention as part of primary care practice. The county also hosted a “Man Up” conference that encouraged men to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

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